IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
WESTERN DISTRICT OF MICHIGAN
SOUTHERN DIVISION

Sterling Currency Group, LLC ,

Plaintiff,

v.

James Maurer and Monetizers LLC (d/b/a Iraqidinar.org),

Defendants.

Case 1:13-cv-00878-RHB

Honorable Robert Holmes Bell

EXHIBIT K

CASE STUDY OF DECEPTIVE MARKETING USED BY STERLING CURRENCY GROUP

Exhibit K demonstrates a case study of deceptive marketing used by Sterling Currency Group. N.B.:

- This Exhibit displays Matt Cutts, the individual in charge of Google's Web Spam team, warning about the dangers of using article spinners to manipulate Google;
- Page 5 includes a Case Study of a company that used the same techniques that Sterling Currency Group's agent Youssef El Hodaigui used to manipulate Google into ranking Sterling's websites high in search results. The techniques covered in the article are the same deceptive practices used for Ty Rhame's other websites sterlingfunder.com, onlinartgroup.com, fairfieldfunding.com and also for David Lilenfeld's lilenfeldpc.com, webstomz.com and others as covered in Exhibits A through J;
- Page 17 displays Google's announcement that they are targeting websites that use web spam to trick Google into ranking websites higher than they should be;
- Page 18 shows that Google eliminated a Google page rank service called 'Build My Rank' which Sterling's agent purchased (Exhibit B, pp. 29, 32, 38, 42, 50, 63; Exhibit C). The company closed its doors and all websites found to be using their service were impacted;
- Page 19 is an article by Forbes criticizing Sterling Currency Group for Youssef's release of an article titled *'Iraqi Dinar Soars Again'* which attempted to pump up Iraqi dinar sales. Forbes discovered that Youssef El Hodaigui owned

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webmarketing411.com and was really working for Sterling Currency Group.

- Page 26 shows that this "less than transparent" press release *'Iraqi Dinar Soars Again'* created 9,100 links in Google; Exhibits A and B show Sterling's agents' lack of transparency telling customers they will be rich one day by visiting iraqidinarreview.com which was actually managed by Sterling's agent and had only one text link going to Sterling Currency Group's website.

Matt Cutts, Google Webspam Czar Talking about Article Spinners

Matt Cutts, Google Webspam Czar says “Remember article spinners? I really hope you’re not still using them.”

Spinners are like an automatic thesaurus, changing out certain words just enough to make the article different enough that you hope Google won't catch on.

Another tactic used real people, often underpaid outsourced workers from developing countries, to change the structure of an article and trade out a percentage of words so you could call an article “unique.” Of course, article spinning typically generates garbled, unintelligible garbage. It did work for a while a few years ago, to fool the search engines into thinking a site had more unique content than it actually had. No longer.

Of course, there are other, less insidious, ways of changing up content just enough to make it appear unique, without adding anything of additional value to the reader. Some may not even be aware of what it is they’re doing; it can be difficult to add your own unique spin when you’re talking about a topic that seems to have been done to death.

Take accounting principles, for example. You’re an accountant and you want to rank for accounting topics, but what can you really add as a unique perspective when accounting principles are standard, static, and have been covered on nearly every accounting site out there? This is the challenge.

Cutts highlights the importance of truly unique content by reminding marketers and publishers that Google is looking for added value. He told Enge, of sites with content that mirrors that of other sites, “While they’re not duplicates they bring nothing new to the table. It’s not that there’s anything wrong with what these people have done, but they should not expect this type of content to rank. Google would seek to detect that there is no real differentiation between these results and show only one of them so we could offer users different types of sites in the other search results.”

It is more important than ever to write from your own experience, on topics on which you have first-hand knowledge, in order to create something not only original in sentence structure or word choice, but in essence.

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Specific to e-commerce and aggregator sites, Cutts said, “They need to ask themselves what really is their value add? That does not mean they cannot create something that works, but they need to figure out what it’s that makes them special.”

Quoted from Miranda Miller at Search Engine Watch “http://searchenginewatch.com/article/2190942/Googles-Matt-Cutts-Talks-Infographics-Differentiation-More-SEO-Topics”

http://searchenginewatch.com/article/2178489/SEO-Why-You-Are-Doing-it-Wrong

SEO, Why You Are Doing it Wrong

Jonathan Allen, May 22, 2012

Like many webmasters affected by the Google Penguin update, Trent Harbour of Berkeyshop.com needed to find out why his site had dropped positions in the Google organic results and how he could reverse that. So he reached out to Search Engine Watch for some answers. **What follows is a cautionary tale of missteps towards the complex problem of ranking on search engines** and an examination into why small businesses are completely at a loss as to what constitutes "ethical" SEO.

Before he was worried about Google and its algorithms, Harbour was a portfolio manager and investor. However, during the 2008 financial crisis he "hit rock bottom" and an illness forced him to give up his job of 10 years. Clean drinking water was pivotal in managing his condition and so he decided to become a distributor of water filters in October 2010. To date, he said he's invested $20K in the business and turnovers peaked at $600/day consistently for four weeks before Google's Penguin update went into effect. Harbour told me his revenues were reduced overnight to "next to nil, since I was penalized" and unique visitors to the site are down by 55%.

What emerged from phone conversations with Harbour was that he really could not distinguish between good and bad links and did not have a fundamental understanding of what really constituted 'good content'. His grasp of the key principles behind the Google algorithm relied heavily on received wisdom from webmaster forums. From my perspective, the maxims he followed for SEO were taken completely out of context from Google's actual goals. Furthermore, from his perspective the competitive landscape seemed to endorse the idea of actively manipulating search engines, whilst Google's algorithm actually seemed to reward him - **albeit temporarily** - for engaging in what were clearly webspam strategies that were against Google's guidelines.

Another challenge: he did not understand the difference between the Panda and Penguin update. He had received but never actually noticed the warning letter dated April 11, 2012 in webmaster tools because he hardly ever logged in. This letter detailed to Harbour that 'unnatural links' pointing to his site had been detected and that he should proceed to remove them, but gave little further insight into what that meant to Google and what actions he could take to rectify the issue.

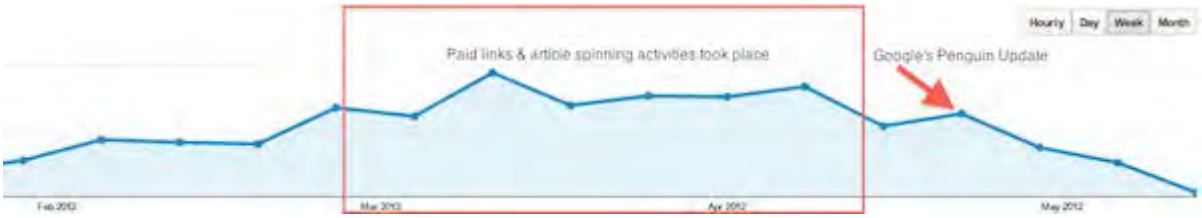
The warning letter about 'unnatural links' combined with the algorithm update announced on April 24 and deployed on May 1, 2012, made Harbour feel like he had been penalized by Google. In those early days of the update it was difficult to explain what had really happened so I asked him to share more details with me so that I could conduct a deeper analysis of his site. Harbour kindly gave me access to his analytics account and lists of the bad links created.

WWW.WhatWentWrong.com?

It's quite simple - Harbour bought article spinning services from a company in China. Article spinning, a form of webspam, violates Google's guidelines.

Article spinning is a technique designed to fool Googlebot into thinking that hundreds of pages are linking to a particular website - however every page published is machine written junk or pure gibberish. Matt Cutts posted his own example of "spun content" on the Official Google blog in the announcement of the algorithm update later dubbed "Penguin."

In a nutshell, the two months that he had commissioned article spinning, March and April 2012, just happened to be the exact same time that Matt Cutt's webspam team at Google resolved to develop an algorithm update that specifically targeted spun content. Thus when the potency of those sites with spun content were rendered useless, Harbour's site was demoted in the rankings.



Wrongly, due to the April 11 warning message regarding 'unnatural links', Harbour felt as if he had been penalized by Google and sought a reconsideration request from Google. However, despite Google providing a 'feedback form' regarding the Penguin update, this form was not a means by which any webmaster could have their website "reconsidered" because, unlike the Panda update that levied a manual penalty, Penguin was an algorithmic update which meant sites would simply be affected by changes in the algorithm for better or worse. Although this was not clear at the time, Google later said that reconsideration was not possible for the Penguin update.

Nonetheless Harbour took the blow to his Google rankings personally and wanted to appeal Google's apparent 'decision'. In further conversation with me, Harbour contends that he bought those services because 'everybody is doing it'; he pointed to some examples from competitors that looked shady. Nonetheless, as far as I could tell, whilst the content they were putting up was not of a particularly high quality either, none of them had engaged in article spinning. No matter how much spam his competitor's may have been investing in, Harbour's website did the wrong thing at the wrong time.

However, in defense of Harbour, arguably Google rewarded him temporarily for engaging in webspam. During March and April of 2012 search traffic for his target term site shot up the rankings and he was making $610 in daily sales. It's a testament to how poor Google's spam detection algorithms actually are that prior tactics were even rewarded. It also shows how Google's webmaster policies are in conflict with Google's technology. To many, in a very real way, what Google 'says' and what Google 'does' are two completely different things. Take a look at the stats below and you can see that search traffic increased within a month (i.e. April 2012) of implementing the webspam strategy.

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But to some degree Google's problem is every webmaster's problem. A poor understanding of the algorithm is fostering even poorer marketing strategies. Yet these strategies continue to force businesses to invest in spam as a kind of mimetic, competitive practice.

What's more, newcomers don't always fully understand Google's guidelines. So they try to copy winning techniques of long established competitors. A deeper investigation into Harbour's website shows that really he has been running a risk that his site would be deemed spam by the search engines for over a year.

Forcing Anchor Text, Rather than Creating a Better User Experience for the Web

Among webmaster and SEO forums, it is well known that links with the right words (namely,anchor text) pointing to your website increase the likelihood of your site ranking for the same term. It's also well known that as the volume of those links with the same term increases, so will your rankings. Put simply, anchor text matches from other domains seems to be a ranking factor on Google and other search engines.

Specifically Google examines all sites' anchor text to use as a signal to determine the 'substance' of the content on the destination page (i.e. the linked page, not the page that links). Anchor text is implicitly tied into the user experience of a website and the site architecture, which Google subsequently extrapolates the relevance of your site to the search query. Google intends anchor text to be used as easy to understand signposts to content to both the user and the search engines. Google does not intend webmasters to point as much anchor text to their site simply for the purposes of ranking.

Therefore the measure of whether you are creating spam or not should always be focused on whether a human user can predict what information they will find on the page they land simply by reading the link.

The Anchor Text Test

A good user experience is one in which the link is placed on anchor text phrases that naturally prompts the reader to investigate other resources that will help clarify any questions raised. Equally, if the logical conclusion is to *visit the product page* of the product discussed (so that the reader can buy it), that is a fair use too.

In that sense, anchor text should be chosen based on the predictive signals it can pass to the reader. As anchor text has the inherent quality of being both a word *and a button* you need to think about the linked text as a signpost and choose the placement of the linked text *as a means of signalling that you are pointing to something else outside of the text.*

In the case of creating links between web documents, if you find your writing does not have an immediately obvious place to include that link, then you should consider rewording your copy to make it more obvious that you are referring to another page and where you can find that page.

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By that reckoning it should be easier to understand that a bad user experience is simply a poorly positioned signpost. In the case of links, a bad user experience would be one in which the anchor text does not sit comfortably within the overall *rationale* of the text or overall *theme* of the page it is on.

A bad user experience would be one in which the use of links is alarming to the point of being haphazard. Another bad user experience would be one in which it is not become obvious as to why the linked document is relevant to the reader. Such links will naturally occur to the reader as being suspiciously placed because they have a suspicious context.

As a rule of thumb, anchor text links should not be randomly peppered all over the page at unless that anchor text is a persistent design feature of a site - such as site navigation (in which case it would not be random anyway).

If a human user cannot explain what a page is about, or why it is linking to another page with those specific words then it is most likely spam.

Linking Strategies That Constitute Spam

In the conversation with Harbour, it appears that he could not clearly differentiate between a paid link and an organic link. In fact, the only way he recognized the difference was that he knew what links he had paid for and what he had not.

However, the distinction became more complicated when he tried to make the ethical argument that his site had been unfairly targeted by Google. The reason being that in his definition of organic link building was that paid links were unethical, unpaid links were ethical. Yet, a deeper analysis shows that his organic link building strategies would have been seen as unethical in most online communities - and eventually to Google.

In fact, what emerges is that his idea of an organic link was one in which he could not control the anchor text, therefore could not generate results and thus the prevailing common sense made the unethical option seem like the only option.

The Cesspool of Links

In analyzing Harbour's own link building strategies I was reminded of the time Eric Schmidt famously called the internet "a cesspool".

For the sake of clarity, what follows a list of the types of links that Harbour tried to create. The first set (1-3) are all the paid links, which are clearly spam - but I've included them as an anatomical guide to webspam. In every instance of the paid link is an example of deliberately exploiting the anchor text ranking signal.

The second set (4-6) are links Harbour believed he had achieved 'organically' and for that matter, ethically. What becomes clear is that he was not making strategic marketing decisions to guide his organic link building activities - he was merely doggedly following the rule that any link won

(that hadn't been paid for) was fair game. Making matters worse: he only had to look to his competitors to see they were doing exactly the same.

1. Spun content (Paid)

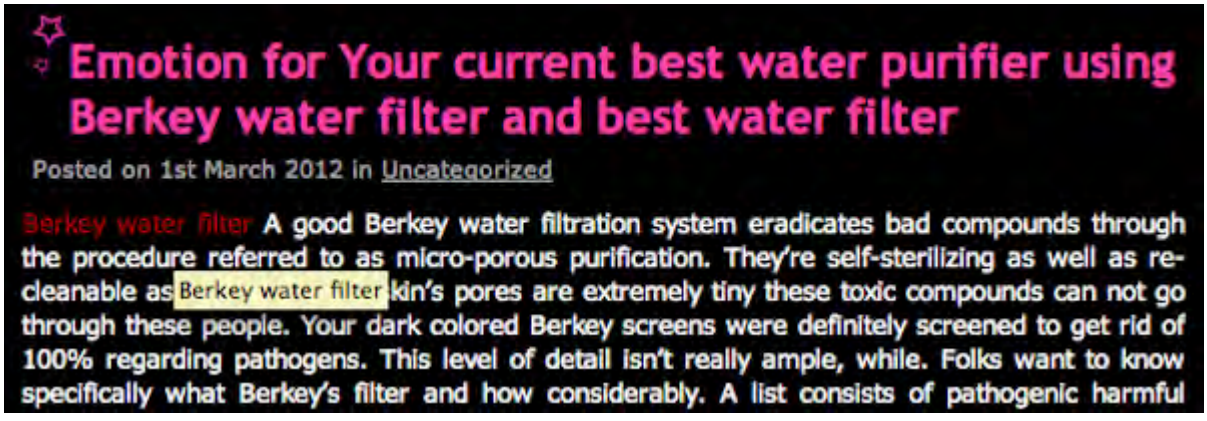
Pure gibberish (or as close to sensical as you can get without making sense), with links embedded in the text is tantamount to spun content. Even where the anchor text is irrelevant to the site, the fact that all these links are within written copy that barely makes sense is proof enough of its spam credentials.

Interstate Packing and Moving

There are certain things you need for your move Interstate or office to another of the great things a lot easier, a charge that is between states or back something to specialize in, the people, after all, if you do not deny that most people find it a difficult task. One of the most important tips is to find good interstate furniture removals. This is to call around to see on the search for references, and in general with the people, whether they are reliable or not. You will be responsible for the handling of a lifetime, so you should feel very comfortable with the decision you make.

Be sure to sit with all shipping documents and organize them by importance and furniture removalists Sydney can solve all these. Make sure your engine booked and confirmed it becomes increasingly difficult to find cheap furniture removals in question approaches day. There is also a good idea to check your insurance and make sure everything is in order for the local movement, the load from one state to another or from one state to another retreat. Buy plenty of boxes to complete the package, or hire a professional company to do the packaging for you. Through their effects and remove unwanted objects from a flea market is a way to make the process of transition much easier.

It is spam. Expect Google to penalize your site if it's associated with rubbish like this.



Emotion for Your current best water purifier using Berkey water filter and best water filter

Posted on 1st March 2012 in Uncategorized

Berkey water filter A good Berkey water filtration system eradicates bad compounds through the procedure referred to as micro-porous purification. They're self-sterilizing as well as re-cleanable as Berkey water filter kin's pores are extremely tiny these toxic compounds can not go through these people. Your dark colored Berkey screens were definitely screened to get rid of 100% regarding pathogens. This level of detail isn't really ample, while. Folks want to know specifically what Berkey's filter and how considerably. A list consists of pathogenic harmful

2. Splogs (Paid)

The characteristics of a spam blog, otherwise known as splogs, are poorly written posts about a wide array of disconnected topics that *do not relate to any particular theme*. In the example below you can see that the post author is nameless (simply 'admin'), and the related posts are

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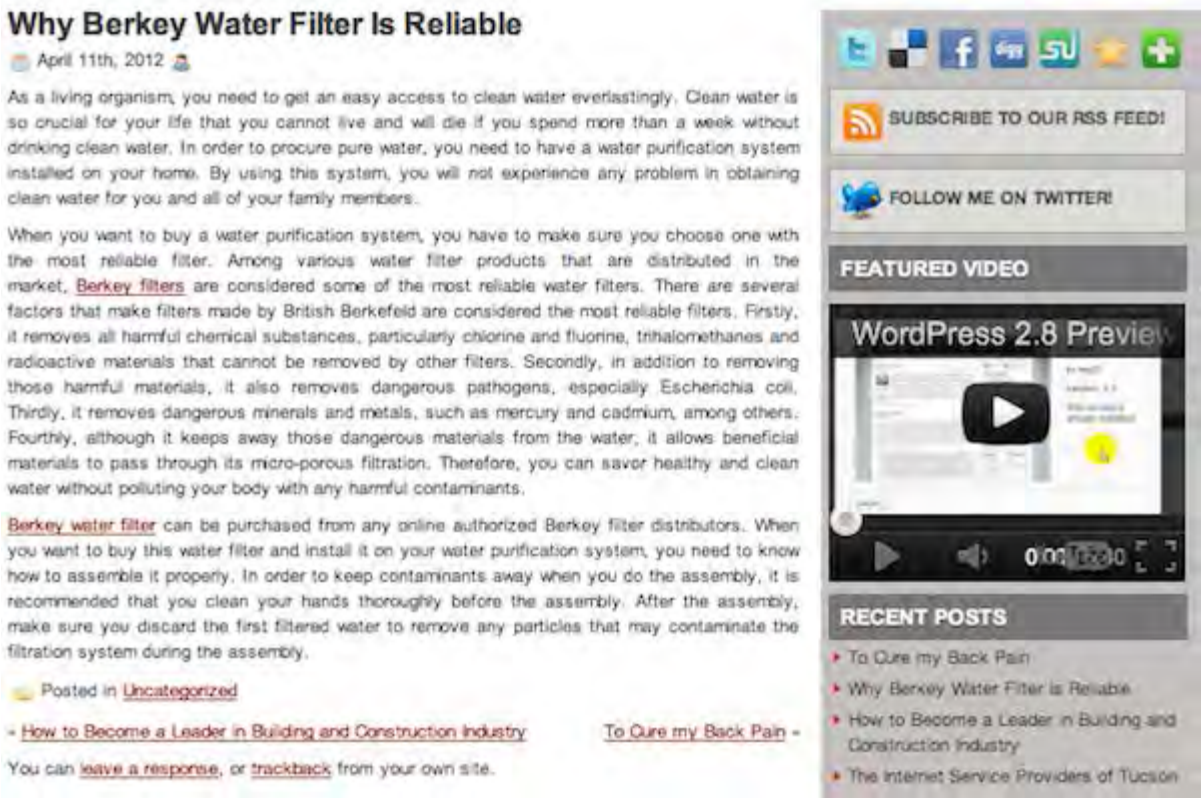
completely unrelated to any other content or theme of the site. To any webmaster or competitor this is clearly a splog as any real site would have a vested interest in ranking on search engines - *which would be implied by a clear thematic focus to the content and design of the site.*



Why Berkey Water Filter Is Reliable

April 11th, 2012

As a living organism, you need to get an easy access to clean water everlastingly. Clean water is so crucial for your life that you cannot live and will die if you spend more than a week without drinking clean water. In order to procure pure water, you need to have a water purification system installed on your home. By using this system, you will not experience any problem in obtaining clean water for you and all of your family members.

When you want to buy a water purification system, you have to make sure you choose one with the most reliable filter. Among various water filter products that are distributed in the market, Berkey filters are considered some of the most reliable water filters. There are several factors that make filters made by British Berkefeld are considered the most reliable filters. Firstly, it removes all harmful chemical substances, particularly chlorine and fluorine, trihalomethanes and radioactive materials that cannot be removed by other filters. Secondly, in addition to removing those harmful materials, it also removes dangerous pathogens, especially Escherichia coli. Thirdly, it removes dangerous minerals and metals, such as mercury and cadmium, among others. Fourthly, although it keeps away those dangerous materials from the water, it allows beneficial materials to pass through its micro-porous filtration. Therefore, you can savor healthy and clean water without polluting your body with any harmful contaminants.

Berkey water filter can be purchased from any online authorized Berkey filter distributors. When you want to buy this water filter and install it on your water purification system, you need to know how to assemble it properly. In order to keep contaminants away when you do the assembly, it is recommended that you clean your hands thoroughly before the assembly. After the assembly, make sure you discard the first filtered water to remove any particles that may contaminate the filtration system during the assembly.

Posted in Uncategorized

« How to Become a Leader in Building and Construction Industry

To Cure my Back Pain »

You can leave a response, or trackback from your own site.

SUBSCRIBE TO OUR RSS FEED!

FOLLOW ME ON TWITTER!

FEATURED VIDEO

WordPress 2.8 Previe

RECENT POSTS

- To Cure my Back Pain
- Why Berkey Water Filter is Reliable
- How to Become a Leader in Building and Construction Industry
- The Internet Service Providers of Tucson

Whilst Google's web crawlers cannot fully comprehend the meaning of text, the average English-language user who came across the site above would instantly comprehend that is junk just by the opening sentences, "As a living organism, you need to get an easy access to clean water everlastingly. Clean water is so crucial for your life that you cannot live and will die if you spend more than a week without drinking clean water."

Like, no shit Sherlock. It is spam. Expect this site to get penalized in the long run and your own rankings to suffer.

3. Free Directories (Paid)

With advances in search engines, directories have pretty much taken a back seat. However, there is a noteworthy irony that online directories used to be the de rigueur way to find information on the web.

Directories classify and categorize information and should perform an important service of organizing information and making it easier to find via a system of increasingly granular taxonomies.

If you as a user cannot navigate from your listing to the home page of a directory by clicking through a series of increasingly broad categories, then it is probably not useful information to any human being and is therefore spam. Put simply, if the directory has no obvious or useful taxonomy it is spam.

In the example below, a supposed directory of webmasters and their sites has no category or sub-category folders.

This is useful to nobody as nobody would have any hope of reaching this page without a search engine. It is spam.

4. User Profile Spam (Organic)

The "secret to SEO" that everyone knows is that your website needs links from other websites, and links from 'authoritative' sites - namely those with a high PageRank (PR) - are "the best". The challenge is to get links from high PR sites which tend to be islands unto themselves. Sites that require users to create user profiles often allow users to include a link to their website. However, such a reciprocal promotion is made on the good faith that you will be an active participant in the community and, by extension, contribute value.

So, creating links in your user profile for the intent of needlessly pushing your own site is tantamount to spamming the community. The example below is an example of a fake user profile used to push a website for none other reason than to get a link from a "high PR" site.

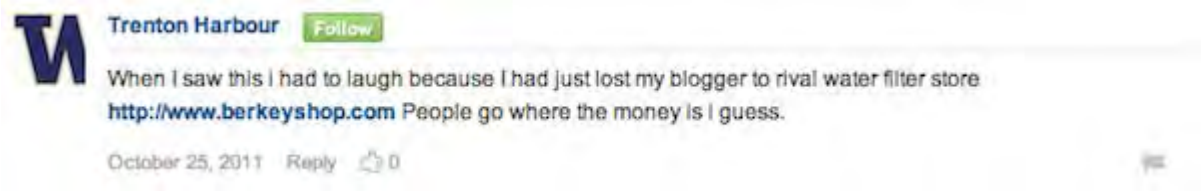
My personal position is that if you are not actively participating in a community as a real person then you do not deserve the ability to post a link or have a link on your profile. Creating a user

account just to post a link is a tactic that creates no value for anybody. Reddit users would rightly be mad at Harbour for this pointless link from their domain to his site. Arguably he was not to know any better as his competitors are also doing something similar on Yelp.

5. Comment Spam (Organic)

Comment spam does not mean you are getting a quality link from a high profile website. If your comment does not contribute to the conversation and drive the discussion forward then it is not a useful link to humans and fails our anchor text test. You might think it would be great to take the discussion of in a pointless tangent for the sake of dropping links but that is not cool either. But if your comment is purely for the sake of dropping links or misleading in any way then I would call that spam.

Harbour may have gotten a link from Mashable in the result below - but it is the worst example of comment spam. Full marks for creativity in dropping a link to your own site by pretending you are sympathetically discussing a personal experience with a competitor.

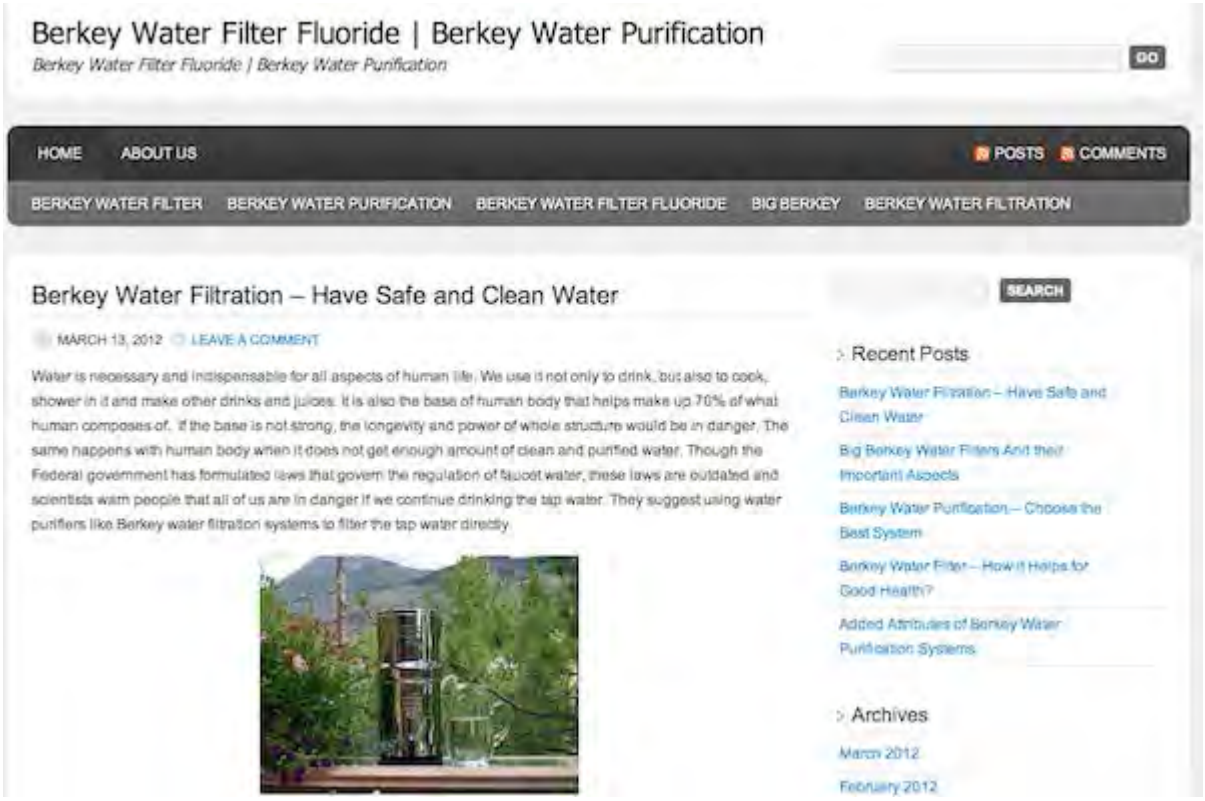


Why would anyone tell people who the competitor is that they lost their talent to, without at the very least mentioning their own company?

Even if Google ever manually reviewed comment spam, I would argue that the example below is justification enough to be labelled as a spammer - which would probably lead to a penalty.

6. Personal Splogs (Organic)

In the hope of increasing the number of links from different domains to your site you may hit upon the brainwave to create a blog on a different domain and point about links to your site. Thus you have total control of the inbound links to your website! Genius.



Even more genius would be to link one personal splog to another, which then links to your website and so sends Googlebot on a digital "round robin."

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Except it is not genius and clearly just more spam.

When Google's Problem Becomes Our Problem

At the heart of it, my personal opinion is that it is a lack of lateral thinking and creativity that is causing people to choose spam as a means to rank. However, in discussions with Harbour I have a more sypathetic view toward those who do not live and breathe the Google Guidelines.

The old adage "if you pay peanuts, you get monkeys" is as true in SEO as any other industry and in seeking to cut costs Harbour cut too many corners and played fast and loose with Google's guidelines. Engaging in spam gets in the way of building a decent web eco-system that can survive the shifting sands of algorithm changes. Ultimately, what Harbour did not realize is that by winning with links from spam sites, he would eventually lose rankings when Google eliminated the ability of those sites to pass PageRank.

The rub for all webmasters is that Google's definition of spam is a moving target. It is arguably hypocritical that Harbour is at the mercy of whatever Google's definition of spam is, with no clear guidance from them as to what to do about it. Even if BerkeyShop.com was not receiving any paid links, the organic strategy was just as vulnerable to Google deeming it spam *in the long term.*

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The converse is that to succeed on Google, you have to play by their rules, which to a greater or lesser extent means following their freemium business model whether you like it or not. The maxim small businesses must live by is "create lots of free value for users" and they just "might start to buy into your premium products and services". But a freemium business model works best on an enterprise scale - or internet scale - which is outside the reach of most small businesses. Google has the luxury of enabling a freemium business model because they are an internet company - not a company selling water filters. When push comes to shove, most small businesses cannot grasp the concept of 'creating value' because there is no clear 'editorial' definition of what 'value' really is from Google. Yet there is a working value dynamic at the heart of Google's own algorithm which creates a secondary market of services - namely *the right anchor text from the most links.*

But this is a simplistic, tactical view that obfuscates cornerstone elements of Google's algorithm yet it has currency *because it is often validated by experience.* It essentially conflates two key Google concepts into one in order to exploit the resultant behavior of the algorithm:

- That inbound links are a measure of authority in the eyes of Google, because Google counts the number of unique domains (and the unique domains pointing to them too) to calculate PageRank (which is a dynamic score that Google uses to determine authority of any domain).
- That anchor text is a signpost for hyperlinks by which Google can infer what the linked page is about.

Ultimately it is the conflation of these two concepts that gets circulated online, packaged up and sold to webmasters **as a quick win formula**. Buying ways to increase *anchor text matches from other domains* is seductive precisely because of the infallible logic and the overall difficulty webmasters face in trying to get any meaningful link from anyone at all.

However, Google's discussion of anchor text in their own Search Engine Optimization starter guide does not go far enough in terms of clarifying the long-term role anchor text plays in the ecology of the web. In fact, Google does not give sufficient advice to webmasters on how to think about the relationship between all websites.

So, there is no working explanation of relevance that anyone can look at. Instead we are furnished with advice that amounts to "how to make a good website". At the very least, Google could provide webmasters with the clarity to understand that links and anchor text are intended to be two distinct quality signals and therefore require two different strategies.

In Google's handling of the 'unnatural link' notices in webmaster tools, they did not provide clear guidance to all webmasters and treated webmasters as "guilty until proven innocent". The entire process was badly handled.

Eric Schmidt once callously said, "We don't actually want you to be successful... The fundamental way to increase your rank is to increase your relevance." Indeed, Harbour 'was relevant' for 4 weeks and then dumped. What is clear is that relevance and spam are on the same sliding scale.

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Google certainly does not owe webmasters a living but it is a failure on Google's part that a lot of this type of stuff did work. Google needs to be transparent with all interested parties and admit that relevance is, for all intents and purposes, as ephemeral as spam. Flaws in the algorithm need to be acknowledged because they are open to exploitation *and thus beget exploitation.* Arguably the algorithms failure to pass its own Turing test is currently passed on to the webmaster. But Google's failure to be real about what webmasters *can do to succeed* is letting these conditions persist.

This Achilles heel, unacknowledged, gives Google more rights to *dictate the web rather than be part of the web.*

An understanding of the strategic difference between anchor text and links, would help webmasters differentiate between what Google understands as organic marketing and what it considers spam. In turn, this understanding would help webmasters to choose a longer term content development strategy and not be swayed by the allure of a short term webspam strategy.

Harbour doesn't naturally have the right to spam. But he does have the right to be upset about Google playing God.

More Next Blog» Create Blog Sign In

Another step to reward high-quality sites

Tuesday, April 24, 2012 at 2:45 PM
Webmaster level: All

Google has said before that search engine optimization, or SEO, can be positive and constructive—and we're not the only ones. Effective search engine optimization can make a site more crawlable and make individual pages more accessible and easier to find. Search engine optimization includes things as simple as keyword research to ensure that the right words are on the page, not just industry jargon that normal people will never type.

"White hat" search engine optimizers often improve the usability of a site, help create great content, or make sites faster, which is good for both users and search engines. Good search engine optimization can also mean good marketing: thinking about creative ways to make a site more compelling, which can help with search engines as well as social media. The net result of making a great site is often greater awareness of that site on the web, which can translate into more people linking to or visiting a site.

The opposite of "white hat" SEO is something called "black hat webspam" (we say "webspam" to distinguish it from email spam). In the pursuit of higher rankings or traffic, a few sites use techniques that don't benefit users, where the intent is to look for shortcuts or loopholes that would rank pages higher than they deserve to be ranked. We see all sorts of webspam techniques every day, from keyword stuffing to link schemes that attempt to propel sites higher in rankings.

The goal of many of our ranking changes is to help searchers find sites that provide a great user experience and fulfill their information needs. We also want the "good guys" making great sites for users, not just algorithms, to see their effort rewarded. To that end we've launched Panda changes that successfully returned higher-quality sites in search results. And earlier this year we launched a page layout algorithm that reduces rankings for sites that don't make much content available "above the fold."

In the next few days, we're launching an important algorithm change targeted at webspam. The change will decrease rankings for sites that we believe are violating Google's existing quality guidelines. We've always targeted webspam in our rankings, and this algorithm represents another improvement in our efforts to reduce webspam and promote high quality content. While we can't divulge specific signals because we don't want to give people a way to game our search results and worsen the experience for users, our advice for webmasters is to focus on creating high quality sites that create a good user experience and employ white hat SEO methods instead of engaging in aggressive webspam tactics.

Here's an example of a webspam tactic like keyword stuffing taken from a site that will be affected by this change:

Archive

Site Feed

Google™

46369 readers
BY FEEDBURNER

Select Language

Useful links

Google Webmaster Central
Webmaster Help Center
Google Webmaster Tools
Webmaster Central on YouTube
Webmaster Central China Blog
Webmaster Central Japanese Blog
Webmaster Central German Blog
Webmaster Central Spanish Blog

Labels

accessibility (8)
advanced (158)
beginner (152)
crawling and indexing (120)
events (44)
feedback and communication (71)
general tips (72)

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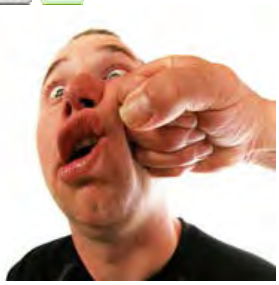
Sterling's agent explains that he used Build My Rank (BMR), linkvine and similar services in Exhibit B Page 29, 32, 38,42,50,63 and Exhibit C

Google Eliminates Another Link Network, BuildMyRank.com – Just One Of Several?

Mar 26, 2012 at 9:16am ET by Barry Schwartz

Like 207 +1 218 Share 221 Buffer 23



The battle between Google and those trying to artificially manipulate its search results is an ongoing battle. Google on March 19th took down one of those blog/link networks named BuildMyRank.com.

BuildMyRank.com confirmed Google has deindexed an "overwhelming majority" of their network as of March 19, 2012. The management of BuildMyRank.com has decided to immediately shut down their service and provide refunds to customers.

BuildMyRank.com thought that Google would allow their network since they felt they provided "better quality service," which was a "bit different from other networks." But as they admitted on their blog, "this was not the case."

On one hand, I am surprised so many people still participate in quick and easy tactics like this? Google has a long history of going after link and blog networks. Here is just one more example. But I guess when things seem to work and it is easy, a human will often go with it. Even though network after network has been hit by the paid link penalties and worse.

Jennifer Ledbetter at PotPieGirl has a lot more on this network being hit by Google on her blog. It might also just be one of several networks hit.

Digital Due Diligence, it its latest newsletter, pointed to Niche Pursuits mentioning that some other networks may have been hit, as well as two forum discussions about this.

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About The Author: Barry Schwartz is Search Engine Land's News Editor and owns RustyBrick, a NY based web consul ing firm. He also runs Search Engine Roundtable, a popular search blog on very advanced SEM topics. Barry's personal blog is named Cartoon Barry and he can be followed on Twitter here. For more background information on Barry, see his full bio over here. See more articles by Barry Schwartz

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Forbes

John Wasik, Contributor
I write about investments, financial planning and personal ecology

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Iraqi Dinar Soars Again?

I recently came across this headline in a press release sent out to various Web sites by the Global Newswire via Comtex: "**Iraqi Dinar Soars in Global Currency Market.**"

As you may have noted from my earlier posts in this blog, the Iraqi dinar is a currency issued by the struggling government of Iraq. It's not traded on any legitimate foreign exchange, although there are plenty of dealers around the world, which are largely unregulated.

Hence the problem with this headline. If there's no global currency market that most educated investors would recognize as a regulated exchange, then what does it mean? Does it have any news value? Who says it's soaring?

In this case, the press release wasn't from any well-established news organization, it was issued by the Sterling Currency Group, LLC, a currency dealer launching a new blog on the subject. That was noted near the bottom of the release, which also states it's "
among the reputable dealers selling and buying Iraqi dinar."

Actually, the release is somewhat oriented towards investor protection while pitching Sterling's reputation and services:

"There is more than one aspect to consider before making a purchase, including Iraq's political, economic, and security situations and the overall volatility of the foreign exchange market. Investors need to assess their own personal tolerance for risk as rates can fluctuate daily. Those who choose to purchase hard currencies, including the dinar, are strongly urged to do their due diligence before entering this non-traditional market.

From http://www.iraqidinar.org/sterling-currency-group-lawsuit-review

There are many disreputable dealers of currency on the Internet. To avoid becoming a victim of one of these scams, a potential investor should spend time ensuring that a dealer adheres to the following criteria before making a purchase. Be certain the dealer you choose:

- Has an excellent Better Business Bureau (BBB) rating of A or better
- Sells authentic currency and provides a money-back guarantee
- Offers to buy as well as sell the currency
- Has a long, continuous history in the business
- Is compliant with industry, state, and federal regulations
- Has visible owners – it should be evident who owns and runs this company
- Has been successfully audited by the Bank Secrecy Act Compliancy Department of the U.S. Internal Revenue (sic) Department"

While these bullet points are a good start, they are certainly no substitute for the kind of regulation exchanges run by the Chicago Mercantile or New York Stock Exchange have to adhere to when listing and trading securities. As I noted above, the dinar is not a listed security and there isn't any governmental agency directly supervising its trading. By the way, there is no "Internal Revenue *Department*." As anyone looking at a dreaded U.S. tax form can tell you, it's the "Internal Revenue *Service*," one of the more churlish government oxymorons. And I'm not sure how much attention our beloved tax agency pays to dinar dealers. That's a subject for another day.

Nevertheless, I agree that transparency is essential. The press release continues: "A currency dealer should offer you transparency and integrity when buying and selling. You need to know exactly who you are buying from," says Ty Rhame, Founder of Sterling Currency Group. "You want to be sure that dealer will still be around if you ever want to exchange your currency in the future."

Ok, that's a given. You don't want a dealer to be fly by night. You also want them to be upfront with the currency's valuations and what might impact its future pricing. As anyone who reads the international news can tell you, Iraq is still in the throes of social chaos and bombs are still killing people there. It may be years before its currency is traded and listed on global exchanges. Even then, the premise of holding it and hoping it will somehow soar in value is a highly risky proposition. You may be better off holding a painfully low-yielding FDIC-insured certificate of deposit, which protects principal up to $250,000 — if you can't afford to lose your investment.

From http://www.iraqidinar.org/sterling-currency-group-lawsuit-review

Still, I was a bit troubled by the misleading nature of the headline, which some investors may mistake for a news headline. So I contacted Youssef El Hodaigui, the contact listed on the release for Web Marketing 411, which represents Sterling. I asked him to clarify the apparent representation that the dinar was increasing in value, even though there was no global exchange listing it. Here was his emailed response:

"As you wrote in your February 24, 2012, article in Forbes, there is no conclusive evidence one way or the other regarding a possible revaluation of the Iraqi dinar. From my personal experience while working closely on Sterling Currency Group's marketing, we found that there are many dinar dealers on eBay or sketchy websites that sell currency with no licensing. Those dealers and resellers are usually the ones who promote the dinar as a great investment opportunity in forums and other media channels.

After reviewing the market, we advised Sterling Currency Group to take another route by being transparent and educating customers about the hype and misinformation regarding the dinar. The intention of the recent press release was to introduce their news blog, which provides daily newsworthy information about Iraq, currency and precious metals.

To clarify, the dinar is not at this time sold through banks or other regulated currency exchanges, yet it is indeed bought and sold through many currency dealers in the U.S. (italics mine). There is clearly a market for the dinar, given the number of dealers and customers. Individual dealers set prices for these currencies, and there is a considerable amount of disparity. That's yet another reason Sterling was interested in providing potential purchasers with a place to go for information. To the best of my knowledge, they are completely compliant with all government regulations pertaining to their industry and are transparent in their dealings."

To put this statement into context, to sell securities or to provide investment advice, you need to be registered through state and federal regulators. If you want to sell insurance products, you need a state license. You even need a license to be a barber or beautician. What questions should you ask of currency dealers?

How do the firms selling dinars register to protect you from unscrupulous transactions? Ask them what their commissions are and compare them to a stock or options purchase. Will they buy back the currency? What kind of haircut will you take if they do? Do they make a market for the currency?

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How big is the market? How much of the currency is in circulation relative to another country of its size? Do banks hold or trade the currency? Which ones? Are they top-tier banks?Do they make a market for the currency? I wouldn't hand over a single dollar for a basket of dinars until these questions were answered to your satisfaction.

When there's exclusively a private market for any security or vehicle, valuations can be highly speculative. If there's no open system with transparent pricing and clearing systems, the investor safeguards are minimal.

This article is available online at:

Iraqi dinar (Photo credit: Wikipedia)

http://www.forbes.com/sites/johnwasik/2012/06/19/iraqi-dinar-soars-again/

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Iraqi Dinar Soars in Global Currency Market

Currency investors worldwide have had their eyes on the New Iraqi Dinar recently. Discussions on currency forums and blogs are heated as to whether this is one of the best or worst investment opportunities in the fast-growing emerging currencies market. Sterling Currency Group, LLC, has launched a new blog with timely currency news from reputable sources to protect customers from rumors or misleading information.

Atlanta, GA (PRWEB) May 31, 2012 -- Currency investors worldwide have had their eyes on the New Iraqi Dinar recently. Discussions on currency forums and blogs are heated as to whether this is one of the best or worst investment opportunities in the fast-growing emerging currencies market. Sterling Currency Group, LLC, has launched a new blog with timely currency news from reputable sources to protect customers from rumors or misleading information.

There is more than one aspect to consider before making a purchase, including Iraq's political, economic, and security situations and the overall volatility of the foreign exchange market. Investors need to assess their own personal tolerance for risk as rates can fluctuate daily. Those who choose to purchase hard currencies, including the dinar, are strongly urged to do their due diligence before entering this non-traditional market.

There are many disreputable dealers of currency on the Internet. To avoid becoming a victim of one of these scams, a potential investor should spend time ensuring that a dealer adheres to the following criteria before making a purchase. Be certain the dealer you choose:

• Has an excellent Better Business Bureau (BBB) rating of A or better
• Sells authentic currency and provides a money-back guarantee
• Offers to buy as well as sell the currency
• Has a long, continuous history in the business
• Is compliant with industry, state, and federal regulations
• Has visible owners – it should be evident who owns and runs this company
• Has been successfully audited by the Bank Secrecy Act Compliancy Department of the U.S. Internal Revenue Department

"A currency dealer should offer you transparency and integrity when buying and selling. You need to know exactly who you are buying from," says Ty Rhame, Founder of Sterling Currency Group. "You want to be sure that dealer will still be around if you ever want to exchange your currency in the future."

Among the reputable dealers selling and buying Iraqi Dinar is Sterling Currency Group, LLC (SCG). Widely considered to be the industry leader, SCG specializes in foreign exchange markets and offers easy access for U.S. and Canadian customers to buy and sell a variety of foreign currencies including the Chinese Yuan, Afghan Afghani, South Korean Won, Swiss Franc, Vietnamese currency, and Japanese Yen and also gold and silver.

Before investing in any foreign currency, a potential investor should read respected news sources in order to follow the daily trends that can affect the value of that currency. Blogs and forums are full of misinformation and personal opinions. Reputable news sources such as the Wall Street Journal, Forbes, Bloomberg, The Economist and MarketWatch should be consulted instead or visit Sterling's blog.

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PRWeb ebooks - Another online visibility tool from PRWeb

Media Contact:
Youssef El Hodaigui
Web Marketing 411
1-404-775-9995
info(at)webmarketing411(dot)com

Youssef El Hodaigui owns webmarketinig411.com along with a number of other websites (such as webstromz.com and impact-webdesign.net) used to promote Sterling Currency Group, Fairfield Funding, Online Art Group and others. See Exhibit E for more detail.

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Sterling created over 9000 back links when they used PR Web to release the article.

The article was made to look like it came from an independent source and was what Forbes wrote about when it found that Youssef from webmarketing411 really was working for Sterling Currency Group

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Forbes

John Wasik, Contributor
This blog is about financial deceptions, swindles and costly untruths.

PERSONAL FINANCE | 5/28/2013 @ 10:56AM | 68,507 views

Dinar Deception Driven By False Hopes

I don't think it's a coincidence that the Iraqi dinar features the ancient Tower of Babel. The monument symbolizes how people can hear different languages, when the message is essentially the same.

The Iraqi dinar is still being sold to thousands of unwitting buyers. The country is still in trouble politically and economically. The currency keeps losing value to the dollar. It is not traded on any legitimate foreign exchange.

Yet it's still being hawked as the latest get-rich-quick scheme. Hopeful buyers keep accumulating the paper, believing the oft-told tale that the Iraqi government will somehow revalue the currency in their favor, so they keep buying more of the questionable notes. There's a better chance of finding Aladdin's flying carpet in your local Home Depot or some day seeing Facebook priced as high as Google.

Last week, the dinar's value plunged even more against the dollar: from 1,200 to 1,300. This development shows that the dinar's dropping value represents hyper-inflation in the troubled country, which has been beset by more than 500 deaths due to sectarian violence in recent months.

Where does this leave you if you're a dinar investor? It means you're holding paper that's worth increasingly less. If one was to consider it an asset — one that's untraded and not listed on any real exchange — it would be like owning a rusting, undriveable car sitting in your driveway.

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Last week, Adil Abdul-Mahdi, the former Iraqi vice president who resigned from his post, harshly criticized the current government's economic policy (as reported by Al-Monitor Iraq Pulse):

"The high demand for the US dollar that we have seen for months has been widening the gap between supply and demand, at about $60 million-$70 million per day. A black market has emerged, in addition to two different exchange rates with a difference of 8%-10%."

Why would Iraqis prefer dollars? Because their own currency is worth less and less, so their purchasing power diminishes. That's not only the curse of inflation, it's a sign of an unstable economy and lack of confidence.

If you're an investor in dinars, it would be essential to find out what the market is for selling the currency (before you buy it, which is not recommended). In a healthy market, there's an active exchange on both sides of the trade. There are now several dealers on the Internet willing to *sell* you dinars, but what will they charge to buy back the currency? My educated guess is that you won't be able to get what you paid for them — ever.

I realize that you can probably buy hundreds of thousands of dinars for relatively few dollars. But you shouldn't expect a payday. There's no relationship between the value of the currency now and future appreciation. These notes may continue to devalue and the Iraqi economy and political state will suffer more strife. There's no reason that you should share in their economic misery.

This article is available online at:

Iraqi dinar (Photo credit: Wikipedia)

http://www.forbes.com/sites/johnwasik/2013/05/28/dinar-deception-driven-by-false-hopes/